

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CU-02 NIC-01 SAJ-01 BIB-01 SS-15

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R 050421Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5198

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AS, UR

SUBJECT: ERMOLENKO CASE REVISITED; EX-DEFECTOR

SCHEDULED TO RETURN TO AUSTRALIA TO RESIDE

REF: CANBERRA 5314, AUG 14, 1974

1. GEORGI ERMOLENKO, 18-YEAR OLD VIOLINIST WHO SOUGHT TO DEFECT DURING VISIT BY STRING QUARTET OF MOSCOW MUSIC COLLEGE TO AUSTRALIA IN AUGUST, 1974, HAS LEFT SOVIET UNION WITH HIS PARENTS AND ARRIVED IN VIENNA FEB 27 ENROUTE TO AUSTRALIA. MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION CAMERON ANNOUNCED PENDING ARRIVAL OF ERMOLENKO FAMILY AT PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 4, AT WHICH HE SOUGHT TO GET MAXIMUM POLITICAL MILEAGE OUT OF NEW SITUATION.

2. AFTER RETURNING TO SOVIET UNION LAST FALL, ERMOLENKO APPARENTLY APPLIED, WITH HIS PARENTS, FOR EXIT VISAS FOR ISRAEL (HIS MOTHER IS A JEW). ERMOLENKO'S FATHER WAS FIFTH VIOLINIST IN MOSCOW STATE SYMPHONY, AND HIS MOTHER WAS FOURTH VIOLINIST IN BOLSHOI ORCHESTRA. CAMERON EXPRESSED HOPE THAT ERMOLENKO'S COULD PLAY FOR SYDNEY SYMPHONY BUT ALSO SUGGESTED THEY MIGHT WANT TO PLAY IN AUSTRALIA AS A TRIO. CAMERON INDICATED THAT GOA HAD ONLY BECOME AWARE OF

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NEWSITUATION FEB 28, WHEN ERMOLENKO APPROACHED AUSTRALIAN

EMBASSY IN VIENNA WITH REQUEST FOR IMMIGRATION VISAS FOR AUSTRALIA. ACTING WITH CONSIDERABLE DISPATCH, GOA APPROVED THEIR APPLICATIONS, AND ERMOLENKO FAMILY EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN AUSTRALIA NEXT WEEK.

3. COMMENT: GOA HANDLING OF ERMOLENKO CASE LAST YEAR WAS SURPRISINGLY CLUMSY, IN VIEW OF EFFICIENT AND SKILLFUL MANNER IN WHICH GOA HAS HANDLED OTHER DEFECTON CASES, INCLUDING TWO DEFECTORS FROM HUNGARIAN ICCS CONTINGENT IN SAIGON IN 1973-74. CAMERON SOUGHT TO SUGGEST THAT GOA DECISION TO RETURN ERMOLENKO TO SOVIET UNION LAST YEAR WAS ONLY WAY HE COULD HAVE GOTTEN HIS PARENTS OUT OF SOVIET UNION AS WELL. HOWEVER, APPEARS THAT NEW ERMOLENKO DEVELOPMENT CAUGHT GOA AS MUCH BY SURPRISE AS ANYONE ELSE, THOUGH UNUSUALLY PROMPT ACTION REFLECTS ITS AWARENESS THAT RETURNING ERMOLENKO TO SOVIET CONTROL WAS NOT RPT NOT POPULAR MEASURE AT TIME. RIGHT-WING IMMIGRANT AND ANTI-COMMUNIST GROUPS WILL CERTAINLY RETURN TO THE CHARGE ON THIS ISSUE, AND MORE WILL BE HEARD OF ERMOLENKO AFFAIR AFTER ARRIVAL OF FAMILY NEXT WEEK.

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